



City of Boston, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor
Michelle Wu

March 25, 2022

Dear North End restaurants,

Thank you for your dedication to each other and for the many ways that you support our city everyday. I share your love for the neighborhood and your commitment to ensuring that the North End remains a thriving business community and tourist destination to make our city proud. Years ago, I lived in the North End and understand the unique joys and realities that residents experience in this community.

As you know, these last two years of outdoor dining have been the first and only time that most North End restaurants have had the chance to offer outdoor seating. The citywide pilot program for outdoor dining in 2020 and 2021 was meant to help provide support for restaurants struggling from the pandemic, as well as safe, outdoor spaces for residents to be together in person. This will be the third and final year of the pilot, after which my administration will launch a community engagement process to ensure public feedback, then make decisions on proposed terms for permanent outdoor dining.

Based on the experience of the past two years, this year's pilot program for the North End is different from that of other neighborhoods because of the unique impacts of outdoor dining on the quality of residential life. This neighborhood is home to the densest concentration of restaurants anywhere in the state. Last summer, this community had more than three times the number of on-street restaurant patios than the next highest neighborhood, the greatest loss of parking spots, and more 311 and constituent service complaints related to noise, congestion, rodents, and street cleanliness from outdoor dining than anywhere else—by far. The North End was home to 77 outdoor dining patios (70 on public property) in just 0.2 square miles, compared to 51 patios in Back Bay (but only 21 on-street), 14 in the Seaport, seven in Roxbury, six in Charlestown, and just one patio in Chinatown. The use of public street space to expand restaurant capacity and liquor license seats is particularly significant in the North End, with many restaurants doubling their capacity through expansion into the street.

In two public community meetings convened over the past two months, residents expressed deep opposition to any form of outdoor dining or pleaded with the City to take a more active role in mitigating community impacts. They described themselves as at their wit's end after two seasons of unprecedented intrusion on neighborhood life. As believers in the benefits of outdoor dining, we crafted the North End program in an effort to try one last time to strike the right balance with thoughtful spacing, time limitations, increased safety protections, and other resources necessary to mitigate the impacts on parking, trash, rodents, and public safety. Many North End residents have called for ending outdoor dining altogether in the neighborhood. If a critical mass of restaurant owners also believe this program is unworkable as proposed, then I am prepared to rescind North End outdoor dining before the start of this season.

City staff have invested hundreds of hours to receive community feedback, adjust plans, and design the layouts. To have enough lead time to successfully prepare and coordinate, the deadline to apply for this year's pilot is April 10th. I look forward to a safe, vibrant spring and summer in the North End and communities across our city and welcome further feedback along the way.

Michelle Wu

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Wu". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor of Boston